

(Washington, DC) - **House Ways and Means Committee member, Congressman Wally Herger, voiced his strong opposition to House Democratic Leadership's attempt to block efforts to deal with Medicare's solvency.** Herger issued the following statement in response:

"For over 40 years, millions of seniors across America have enjoyed longer and healthier lives as a result of the health care provided through the Medicare program. Yet as a result of demographic changes and rising health care costs, Medicare is now in dire financial straits. The numbers are absolutely staggering. According to the most recent report by Medicare's Board of Trustees, Medicare's unfunded obligations have surpassed \$85 trillion. That's more than six times the annual output of our entire economy, and more than fifteen times the current federal debt held by the public.

"We have a choice to make: Are we going to take action now to save Medicare for the future? Or are we going to ignore the problem and hope that it just goes away? I understand that many members might prefer not to deal with this issue in an election year. But the Medicare funding warning trigger was designed precisely to force Congress to confront an issue that many would rather ignore. And that's what the American people sent us here to do: confront the tough challenges facing our country's future, even when that means taking some political risks.

"The President has proposed some fairly modest reforms to begin shoring up Medicare's future. I personally thought his suggestions made sense. But under the trigger rules, the Majority was entirely free to reject the President's ideas and develop their own proposal for reining in the growth of Medicare. Instead, the Majority has chosen to take the easy way out and do nothing. Today, we are sending a message to the American people that this Congress is simply not up to the task of solving our nation's problems.

"The truth is, we are gambling with our future. I believe Congress has an obligation to do our best to leave America better off for the generations that will follow us."